

# growing an **INCLUSIVE** city FROM VISION TO REALITY

THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA COMPREHENSIVE PLAN

SEPTEMBER 2006

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### New Draft Comp Plan Outlines a Better Future

**The District soon will have a Comprehensive Plan as dynamic and diverse as the city itself.** The revised draft Comp Plan achieves a major breakthrough while addressing the realities and challenges of today's DC: creating a plan that is easier for the public to use and understand and easier to follow.

The voices of thousands of District residents echo in this plan for housing, transportation, economic development, land use, parks and recreation, the environment and more. Your input generated new ideas, better choices and wiser decisions and, most importantly, a better plan.

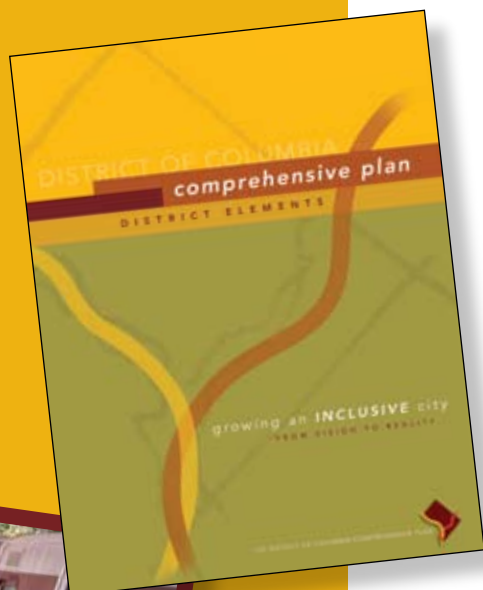
### Continuing DC's Tradition of Great Plans

The District of Columbia has a long tradition of planning.

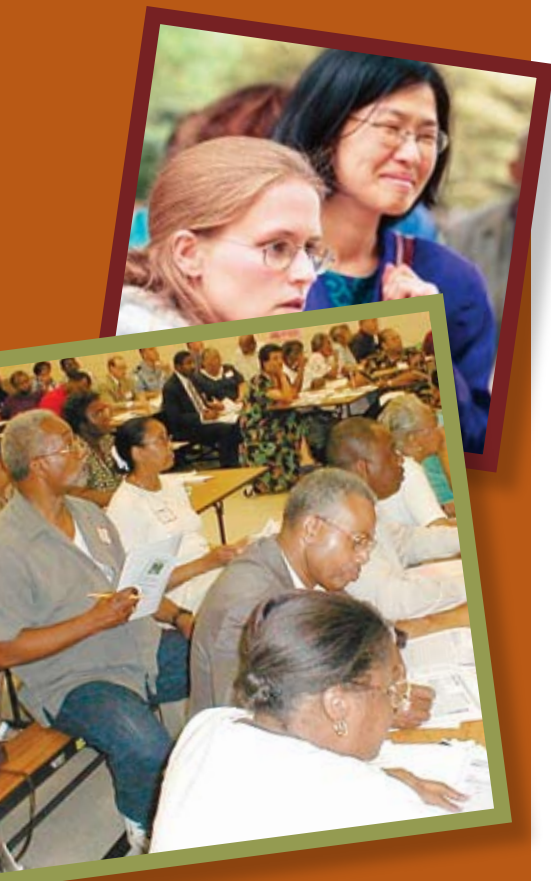
Washington itself was conceived as a planned city in 1791.

More than a century later, the Congressional McMillan Commission drafted a plan for the National Mall as well as many of our city's parks and public spaces. City plans were prepared throughout the 20th century, shaping the form of our neighborhoods, park networks, and transportation systems.

The Draft Comprehensive Plan is a different kind of plan, designed to tackle the complex challenges of the 21st century. Its focus is on issues like affordable housing, environmental justice, traffic congestion, and neighborhood conservation. Although the city already has a Comp Plan addressing these topics, it was drafted 22 years ago. Our existing Plan has served the city well, but it is now outdated and needs to be replaced.



Review the  
entire new draft  
Comprehensive Plan online:  
[www.inclusivecity.org](http://www.inclusivecity.org)



# Thousands of Community Members Provide Passion, Energy, New Ideas

During the past two years, thousands of residents have participated in many different roles, bringing their ideas, passion for the city and energy to the process of planning the District's future. This input has influenced the draft plan in countless ways.

The planning process itself was guided by a Task Force of stakeholders appointed by the Mayor and City Council. Task Force members played a strong role in shaping the plan's content and organization by calling for extensive data analysis and insisting upon policies rooted in facts.

In response to Task Force and public requests, the Office of Planning analyzed many issues, including existing land use, the District's capacity for future development and redevelopment, economic development, the environment, infrastructure, community services, and transportation needs. This analysis has been used to craft more effective policies and create a better and more informed basis for planning in the District.

At four workshops in January, 2005 more than 350 people shared their opinions about the key issues facing the District. In September 2005, hundreds more attended community fairs around the city, where they had an opportunity to visit various "stations" that focused on particular planning topics and discuss policy options addressing these topics. In May and June 2006, nearly 500 people took part in nine town meetings held around the city to discuss the Draft Plan and its policies and maps. A Mayor's hearing in June 2006 provided another opportunity for public input.

Between rounds of broad community input, the Office of Planning participated in discussions with community groups from across the city. Small group discussions focused on particular topic areas—such as arts and culture, the future of downtown, colleges and universities, the environment, and Latinos and planning. Separate meetings were held to gather input from dozens of neighborhood and civic organizations, as well as representatives from schools and business groups.

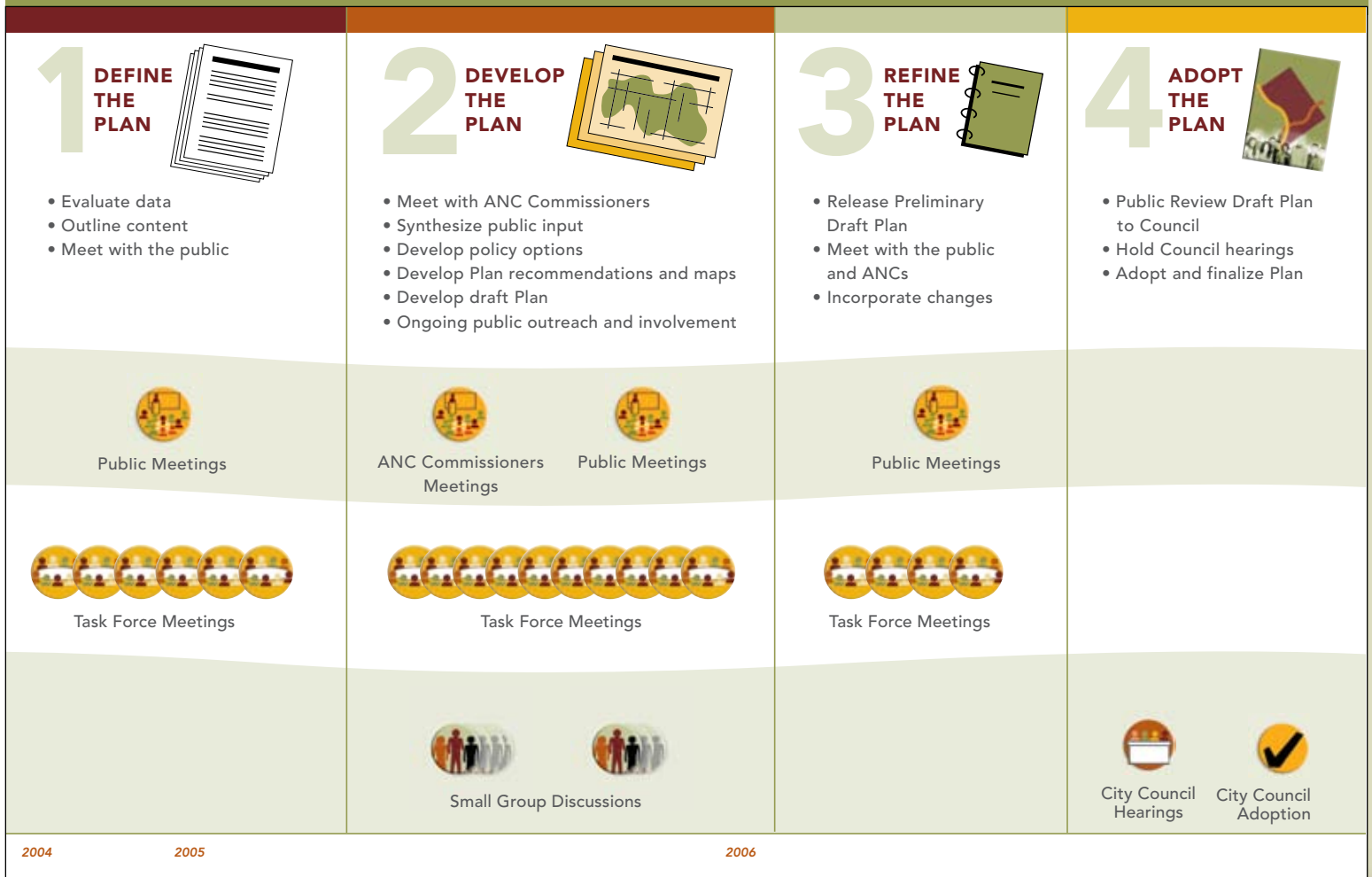
To keep everyone current on the process, the Office of Planning spread the word through the Comp Plan website ([www.inclusivitycity.org](http://www.inclusivitycity.org)), as well as through print materials and advertisements in local newspapers, including African-American and Latino outlets, and radio spots and interviews.

Engaging people who are new to planning or unfamiliar with the planning process has been a key aim of the public involvement program. Materials have been specifically developed to reach people who may have been overlooked in the past, including a Comp Plan video produced in English and Spanish, introductory

## The Comp Plan has been community-driven from day one:

- 24 large public meetings attended by more than 1,500 people
- 2 million hits on the Comp Plan web site
- 600 subscribers to the inclusivitycity web site who received regular updates
- 24 meetings of the Council and Mayor-appointed Task Force
- Numerous small group discussions
- 100+ briefings with ANCs and other interest groups
- 587 pages of written comments from the public on the "Working Draft"
- 48 speakers and 150 pages of testimony at the Mayor's Public Hearing
- Outreach materials prepared in English and Spanish
- Media coverage in print, TV and radio

## Working Together to Create the Next Generation of DC's Comp Plan



materials on plans and planning, a visual timeline that illustrated how the process works from beginning to end, and detailed explanations of how planning affects residents.

The Plan itself reflects input from hundreds of residents submitting written comments on early drafts of each chapter. Chapters were posted to the Comp Plan website as they were finished, and second and third drafts were prepared to incorporate public feedback. The July 2006 Mayor's Draft represents the third draft of most Comp Plan chapters and responds to almost 800 pages of feedback from District residents, ANC Commissioners, businesses, institutions, and government agencies. The Mayor's Draft itself was released nine weeks before the first public hearing to provide sufficient time for community review.





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## New Draft Plan is a Breakthrough

Comprehensive plans are most effective when they are accessible and easy to navigate by both the public and the people who use them every day. The new Plan is a communications breakthrough: it's easier to obtain, easier to understand, and easier to actually see where and how we will grow.

One of OP's highest priorities has been to make the Comp Plan dynamic and functional, so that it serves the needs of all of the District's citizens and stakeholders. The draft Comp Plan articulates the District's planning policies and it sets these policies within the context of the District's situation today (the "story" of DC), providing a clear guide on how to implement these policies from the moment the plan is adopted.

Unlike the existing text-only plan, the revised Comp Plan is designed to be a communication tool that uses visually appealing color graphics such as maps, photos, charts and tables, making it functional and user-friendly. Chapter content is well-organized under consistent headings, and topic icons help keep users oriented within the document. Cross-references are used to avoid redundant text and help the user navigate the Plan.

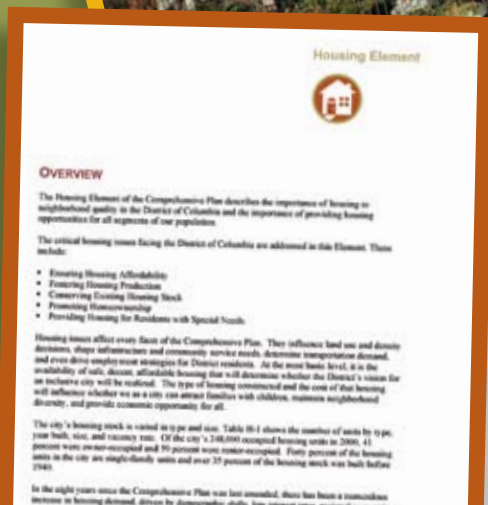
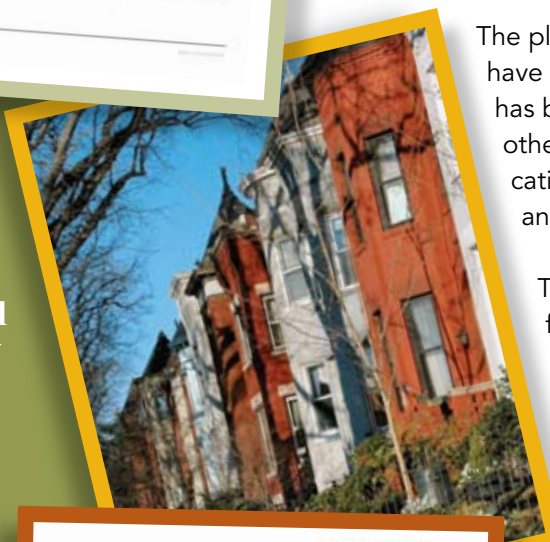
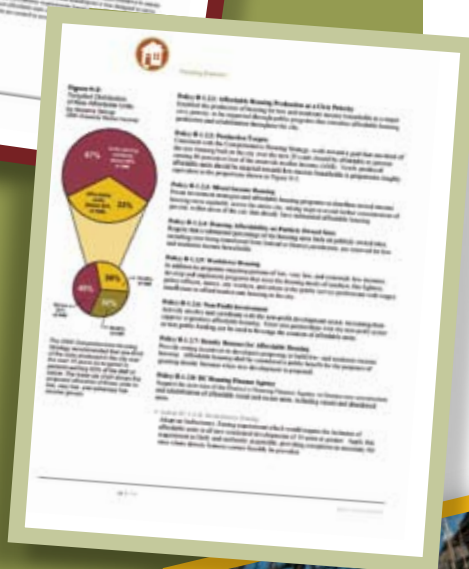
The plan's content also has been reorganized. While some elements have been retained, others have been refocused ("public facilities" has become "community services and facilities," for example), and others have been added. New elements have been added on educational facilities; parks, recreation and open space; infrastructure; and arts and culture (see pages 5-7).

The new plan also achieves internal consistency—both in its format and its content. Each chapter contains a clear and consistent hierarchy of goals, policies, and actions. The policies and actions complement and reinforce one another, avoiding contradictions and conflicting directions. A balance between flexibility and predictability is provided throughout the Plan.

After the Plan has been adopted by the Council, steps will be taken to make the document even more accessible.

A "subject" and "place" index will be added to the printed plan. A glossary will provide quick definitions of key terms. A web-based version of the Plan is scheduled to be completed in 2007, and CD-ROM versions of the Plan and maps will be made available for distribution.

A balance between flexibility and predictability is provided throughout the Plan.



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## THE COMPREHENSIVE PLAN IN A NUTSHELL

# The Path to a More Inclusive City

**The Comprehensive Plan contains 25 chapters, including an Introduction, 13 “citywide” elements, 10 “area” elements, and an Implementation Element.**

**Introduction** explains the purpose and legal authority of the Comp Plan, the process used to update the Plan, and the relationship of the Plan to other city plans and programs.



The **Framework Element** describes the forces driving change in the District of Columbia, presents population and employment projections for the next 20 years, lays out 36 principles to guide future growth, and introduces the Policy Map and Land Use Map (see page 8).



The **Land Use Element** addresses the major growth and neighborhood conservation issues facing the city today. It provides background data on local land uses and presents policies to guide neighborhood conservation, the mixing and buffering of different land uses, and the siting of challenging land uses. The Element also defines the desired patterns of future growth in the city. It includes strategies to direct most new development to Central Washington, the Anacostia waterfront, major transit corridors, selected Metro stations, and a handful of large underutilized sites around the city.



The **Transportation Element** addresses the transportation and mobility challenges facing the city. The Element emphasizes the link between land use and transportation decisions and focuses on the District’s relationship to the region around it. The Element reinforces DDOT and WMATA plans for new bus rapid transit and streetcar lines, and expansion of Metrorail service. It calls for new transportation strategies to reduce congestion without building costly new roads. The Element also addresses parking, truck and freight movement, bicycle and pedestrian needs, car sharing, and other important transportation issues.



The **Housing Element** strives to preserve existing affordable housing, create new affordable housing, and avoid the displacement of residents faced with rising housing costs. The Element sets a target of providing 19,000 new housing units for lower income households over the next 20 years. It recommends new programs to achieve this target, including new construction and the conversion of older apartments to permanently affordable units. Policies call for inclusionary zoning, expanded home ownership programs, and initiatives to meet the needs of families with children, seniors, the disabled, the homeless, and others with special needs.



The **Environmental Protection Element** establishes a forward-thinking “green” agenda for the 21st century. This includes policies and actions to restore the city’s tree canopy, improve our rivers and streams, reduce greenhouse gas emissions, promote community gardening, reduce erosion and conserve topsoil, sustain plant and animal habitat, conserve water and energy, and expand recycling. The Plan proposes new ways to reduce stormwater runoff and encourage “green” building. It also addresses environmental hazards in the city, especially air and water pollution, noise, and exposure to hazardous materials.



The **Economic Development Element** identifies ways the District can improve its competitive edge within the regional, national, and global economies. The Element looks at ways to sustain federal employment, maintain a healthy office market, grow the retail and entertainment sectors, and expand a “knowledge” economy underpinned by the city’s think tanks, cultural and educational institutions, and global finance and media companies. The Element describes ways the city can improve its neighborhood shopping districts, retain and expand small and minority businesses, and assist local entrepreneurs. A major emphasis is placed on linking DC residents to the 125,000 new jobs that are forecast over the next 20 years.



The **Parks, Recreation, and Open Space Element** is a new chapter of the Comp Plan. It protects our existing parks, including the small green triangles along many of our major streets. The Element calls for new parks on future development sites and along the Anacostia River. It recommends improving the Fort Circle Parks and local trails, protecting “functional” open spaces like cemeteries and institutional land, making better use of our schoolyards as neighborhood parks, and improving our recreation centers. Basic land management principles are set forth for the more than 900 acres of parks operated by the District of Columbia.



The **Urban Design Element** looks at architecture, aesthetics, and the appearance of streets and public space. It includes illustrations showing “do’s” and “don’t’s” for future infill development and alterations. The Element explores ways to avoid sharp contrasts in building style and height, enhance neighborhood identity, and overcome physical barriers like freeways and railroads. It strives to protect the integrity of historic plans for the city, reconnect the city to the waterfront, strengthen major avenues, preserve important views, and reinforce the traditional scale and design of our neighborhoods and business districts.



The **Historic Preservation Element** calls for expanded efforts to preserve Washington’s legacy of historic resources, and to educate and inform the public about this legacy. The Element promotes DC government stewardship of its own historic properties such as schools and fire stations, and calls for the protection of historic landscapes and open spaces. It goes beyond the prior Comp Plan by addressing archaeological resources and preservation of the “recent past.” The Element establishes general principles for the rehabilitation, restoration, and reuse of the nearly 25,000 properties that are protected by historic designation in the city.



The **Community Services and Facilities Element** contains policies and actions on health care facilities, child care and senior care facilities, libraries, police stations, fire stations, and other municipal facilities. It calls for a Public Facilities Master Plan to guide the future use of these facilities and plan for new facilities. The Element aims for more equitable distribution of health care facilities, new early childhood development centers, and modernization of the entire library system. One of its major recommendations is to strengthen the link between capital improvement programming and the Comp Plan.



The **Educational Facilities Element** is a new chapter of the Comp Plan. It addresses physical planning issues related to school facilities, including school modernization, the siting of charter schools, and the growth of colleges and universities. The Element encourages the city to retain its surplus public schools, recognizing that these facilities may be needed in the future as the city grows. Policies are included to support the use of schools for “wrap-around” services like health care and child care, thereby bolstering the role of schools as community centers.



The **Infrastructure Element** is another new chapter of the Comp Plan. It focuses on maintenance and modernization of the District’s water, sewer, storm drainage, solid waste, energy, and telecommunications systems to meet 21st century needs. Policies address the separation of storm drainage and sanitary sewer lines, replacement of lead water pipes, the upgrading of deficient water and sewer mains, the upgrading of the Fort Totten waste transfer station, and other issues that ensure the long-term reliability and safety of public infrastructure.



The **Arts and Culture Element** is also a new Plan chapter. The Element recognizes the power of the arts to build bridges between communities, strengthen neighborhood identity, enrich the human spirit, and promote a sense of community and civic pride. Its policies call for additional arts facilities, public art, and arts districts. The Element also seeks to support and grow the city’s “creative class”, recognizing the importance of creative thinking to the city’s economy and quality of life.

The **10 Area Elements** (Chapters 15–24) provide more focused direction for smaller areas of the city. Taken together, the 10 areas cover the entire city. The Area Elements recognize that although we are one city, we are made up of many communities with different needs and physical characteristics. The 10 Elements provide place-specific policies that recognize these differences, and provide more specific guidance for areas where land use changes are expected.

Each area element includes an overview, a context section that describes the area’s history and demographics, and a statement of planning and development priorities for that area. This is followed by policies and actions on growth, conservation, and community resources for the entire area—and finally policies and actions for specific “focus areas” within each area. A map of the 10 Planning Areas is provided on Page 9 of this Summary.

The **Implementation Element** describes how the Plan will be carried out. Page 11 of this summary has additional information on this chapter.



# The Comp Plan Maps

The Comprehensive Plan includes two poster-sized (40" x 56") color maps: the Generalized Policies Map and the Future Land Use Map.

The Generalized Policies Map describes how and where the District will grow and change in the coming decades. It identifies 25 "land use change areas" where substantial new development or change is expected by 2025. The Map also identifies "neighborhood enhancement areas"—these are mostly residential areas where infill development is desired to help stabilize and revitalize communities. The Map classifies most of the city's neighborhoods as "conservation areas." While development is allowed in the conservation areas, they contain very little vacant land and will not change substantially in the years ahead.

The Policies Map also locates and classifies the city's business districts. These areas are shown as:

- Main Street Mixed Use Corridors—pedestrian-oriented shopping streets, typically with housing over retail shops
- Neighborhood Centers—small shopping centers serving the surrounding neighborhood
- Multi-Neighborhood Centers—larger shopping areas serving a broader market area and providing a wider range of services
- Regional Centers—shopping and office centers that draw patrons from across the city and suburbs
- Central Employment Area—the city's central core

The Future Land Use Map uses 14 different colors to express the city's policies for land use and density. Every piece of land in the District of Columbia is assigned a color. There are four residential categories, four commercial categories, and categories for industry, open space, institutions, local public facilities, federal land, and water. The map also shows areas where mixed uses are preferred.

The revised Comp Plan includes more than 800 amendments to the prior Future Land Use Map. About 200 of the amendments correct errors on the 1998 Plan Map. About 400 provide a better match between the Comp Plan and what is actually on the ground. These changes are important to protect single family neighborhoods and to recognize the many parks, schools, and public facilities that do not appear on the prior Plan's map. In other locations, Map amendments create opportunities for growth, new uses, or higher density, consistent with policies in the Plan.



*focus!*

## The Plan Addresses Local and Citywide Issues

One of the biggest changes in this Comp Plan is the way it addresses policy from a geographic standpoint.

In the past, the Comp Plan included citywide and ward-level policies, while policies for particular neighborhoods and business districts were adopted as separate Small Area Plans.

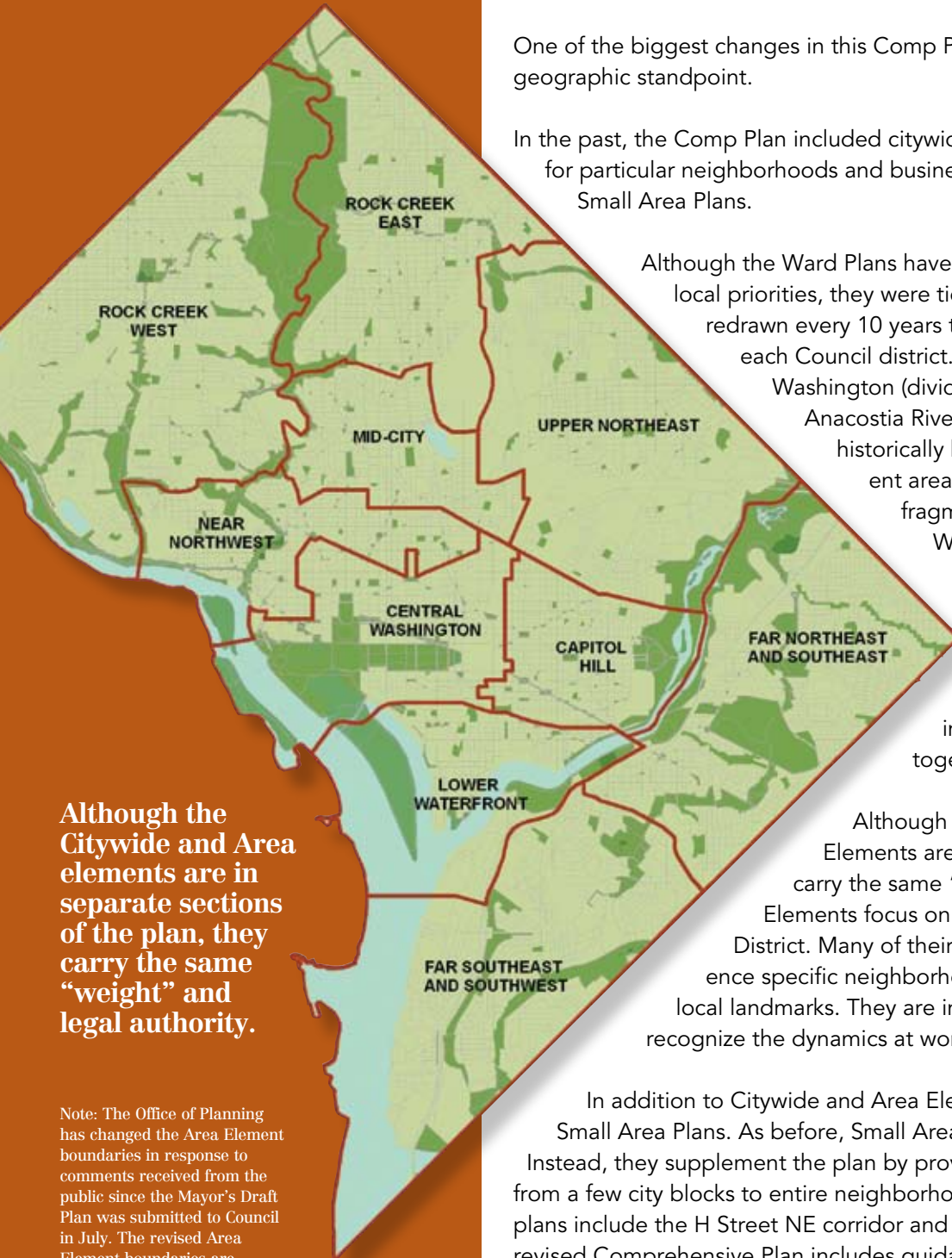
Although the Ward Plans have been an effective vehicle to express local priorities, they were tied to ward boundaries, which are redrawn every 10 years to ensure equal representation in each Council district. As a result, places such as Downtown Washington (divided by a ward boundary) and the Anacostia River (divided by four ward boundaries) historically have been addressed in several different areas of the Comp Plan. This approach has fragmented the policies related to many of Washington's most important places.

The revised Comp Plan includes Citywide Elements, each of which address a topic that is citywide in scope (see pages 5–7). The plan also includes 10 Area Elements, which together encompass the entire District.

Although the Citywide Elements and Area Elements are in separate sections of the plan, they carry the same “weight” and legal authority. Area Elements focus on issues unique to particular parts of the District. Many of their policies are “place-based” and reference specific neighborhoods, corridors, business districts and local landmarks. They are intended to articulate local priorities and recognize the dynamics at work in each part of the city.

Although the Citywide and Area elements are in separate sections of the plan, they carry the same “weight” and legal authority.

Note: The Office of Planning has changed the Area Element boundaries in response to comments received from the public since the Mayor's Draft Plan was submitted to Council in July. The revised Area Element boundaries are shown above.



In addition to Citywide and Area Elements, the city will continue to develop Small Area Plans. As before, Small Area Plans are not part of the Comp Plan.

Instead, they supplement the plan by providing detailed policies for areas ranging from a few city blocks to entire neighborhoods or corridors. Examples of Small Area plans include the H Street NE corridor and the Takoma Metro station area. The revised Comprehensive Plan includes guidance on how and under what circumstances Small Area Plans should be prepared.



# growth!

## How Will DC Grow?

The District has experienced a lot of change in the past few years. While continued change is challenging on many levels, from a planning perspective, it is both inevitable and desirable.

The draft Comp Plan provides guidance on how to manage change in ways that protect the positive aspects of life in the city while reducing negatives such as poverty, crime, and homelessness. For example, the Comp Plan contains several policies and actions that support neighborhoods. But it also recognizes that many neighborhood issues are complex and require that the city balance several competing goals. In this vein, the draft Comp Plan recognizes the need for housing in the District that is affordable and that appeals to families with children (not just single and couples), and it also states that this housing must be compatible with existing neighborhoods.

### Population, Household and Job Forecasts, 2005-2025

	2005	2025	20 year change
<b>Households</b>	254,700	311,800	+57,100
<b>Population</b>	577,900	699,600	+121,700
<b>Employment</b>	745,400	870,400	+125,000

Expanding the housing supply is a key component of the District's vision of creating successful neighborhoods. But it doesn't stop there—the District needs both residential and non-residential growth to thrive. Improved transportation and shopping, better neighborhood schools and parks, preservation of historic resources, and improved urban design also are essential to the future of our neighborhoods. And all of these are keys to the city's fiscal health and the quality of life for all DC residents.

Non-residential growth, meanwhile, creates jobs and opportunities for residents, including less affluent households. This growth not only will create wealth and opportunity within the city, it will offset commuter traffic, reduce social service expenses, and improve the quality of life for thousands of residents.

We expect that future employment growth will be concentrated in Central Washington and along the Anacostia River. In fact, these areas may absorb three-quarters of the city's job growth, principally in places such as the South Capitol Street Corridor, the Southeast Federal Center, and the New York Avenue Metro Station area.

During the next 20 years, development is expected on large sites (the Southwest Waterfront, the St. Elizabeths campus, and Reservation 13, for example), vacant infill sites, and underutilized commercial and industrial properties, particularly along corridors such as New York Avenue and Georgia Avenue. These sites hold much promise, from large mixed use communities, to new parks and open spaces, to neighborhood-scale infill development on the vacant lots scattered throughout the city.

The District's housing stock is expected to increase by 57,000 units by 2025, 10,000 of which are already under construction or about to break ground. The District is also projected to add 125,000 jobs by 2025. While these figures are ambitious, the U.S. Census has confirmed that the city has turned the corner and is growing. The Census recently announced that, after five decades of decline, the city gained 10,000 residents between 2000 and 2005.

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# implementation!

## From Vision to Reality: Implementing the Plan

What separates this plan from many others is its focus on implementation. The Comp Plan is a promise to District residents of a better future. Implementing the plan will fulfill this promise. To carry out the plan, the Mayor and Council will have to make tradeoffs, set priorities, work within fiscal and legal constraints, and have the political will to make difficult decisions. The public will now be able to track this process using the Implementation Element's "action planning" matrix.

An entire chapter of the Plan is devoted to Implementation. The chapter describes the various tools for carrying out plan actions—especially zoning, capital improvement programming, and budgeting. It lays out procedures for monitoring the plan's effectiveness, translating policies into regulatory controls, and periodically amending the Plan as conditions and issues change.

The most critical part of this chapter is the "Action Planning" matrix. Every one of the Plan's 600 actions is recapped in tabular format. Responsible agencies and timelines are listed for each action. Actions that require a change to zoning regulations (including the zoning map) are specifically highlighted, as are those that may require capital funding. Some 50 actions are identified as "priority" actions, indicating that their completion is essential to carrying out Comp Plan policies.

The Comp Plan can help decision makers make better decisions. By identifying the crucial steps and parties responsible for putting the plan in action, as well as the timing of these actions, the plan provides an alternative to haphazard or ad hoc decision making. Instead of merely articulating policy, the Comp Plan explains how these policies can and will be implemented, an important step in establishing the plan's credibility and providing a way to measure how well it is being carried out.

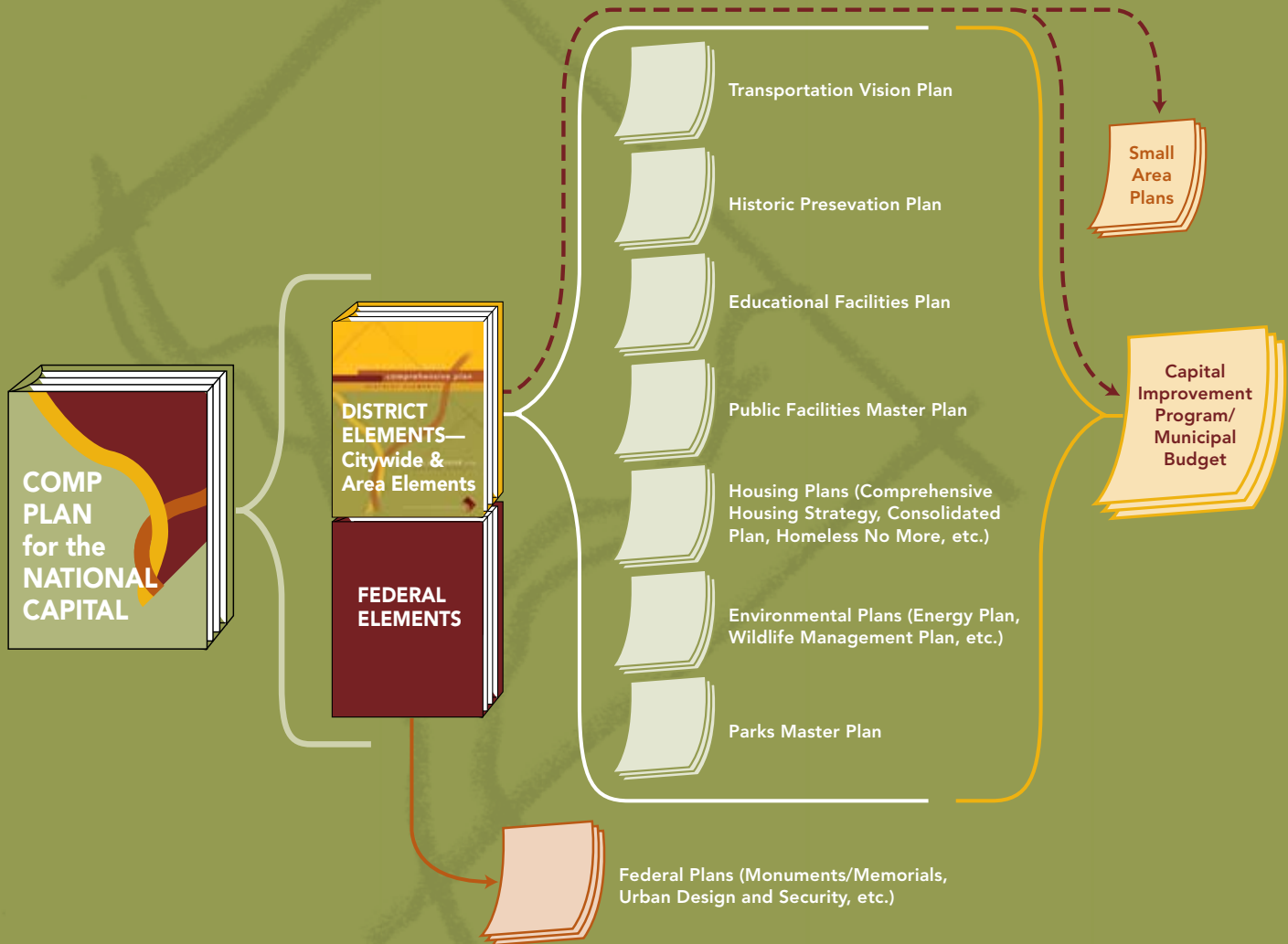
**The Comp Plan is a promise to District residents of a better future. Implementing the plan will fulfill this promise.**





# The Family of Plans

How do the many plans in the District relate to one another? One way to understand their relationship is to think of them of as a “Family of Plans” with the Comprehensive Plan as the head of the family. The DC statutes require preparation of the Comp Plan to guide the overall development of the city. It is the only statutorily required plan. The Comp Plan also sets land use policy, which is implemented through the zoning ordinance. In this special role, the Comp Plan guides other city plans that address development issues, including plans for transportation, historic preservation, parks and recreation. These plans help to implement and further the goals of the Comp Plan.



**Please go to our website**  
**[www.inclusivecity.org](http://www.inclusivecity.org)**  
**or call (202) 442-8812 for more information**



District of Columbia  
 Anthony A. Williams, Mayor  
 September 2006